

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 H-01 SP-02 INR-05 PRS-01 RSC-01

MMS-01 L-01 IGA-01 /039 R

DRAFTED BY EA/K:JDFORBES:MAR

APPROVED BY EA/K:DLRANARD

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R 020309Z NOV 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 241639

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, KS

SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN OVER PRESIDENTIAL TRIP TO
KOREA

1. FOR INFORMATION OF EMBASSY ONLY, FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF
LETTER ADDRESSED TO PRESIDENT BY EIGHT REPRESENTATIVES.
LETTER EXPRESSES CONCERN THAT VISIT MAY BE MISINTERPRETED
AS ENDORSEMENT FOR ROKG INTERNAL POLITICAL POLICIES AND
URGES PRESIDENT TO MEET WITH KOREAN OPPOSITION LEADERS.

2. QUOTE. YOUR DECISION TO VISIT SOUTH KOREA IN NOVEMBER
CARRIES SOME GRAVE RISKS FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. THE
SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH KOREA HAS
RECEIVED EXTENSIVE CONSIDERATION BOTH BY THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE DURING THE HEARINGS AND MARK-UP OF THE FOREIGN
AID BILL, AS WELL AS DURING JOINT HEARINGS BY THE SUB-
COMMITTEES ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MOVEMENTS AND
ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS. WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE
HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH YOU TO DISCUSS THE
KOREAN TRIP AND HOW IT CAN BEST REFLECT THE COMMON ASPIRA-
TIONS OF THE KOREAN AND AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR THE ATTAINMENT
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OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS.

2. AS YOU ARE AWARE, PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG HEE HAS IN RECENT YEARS PLACED SEVERE RESTRICTIONS ON THE EXERCISE OF FUNDAMENTAL CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES. AT THE PRESENT TIME, APPROXIMATELY 200 PEOPLE ARE IN PRISON FOR VIOLATING DECREES WHICH MADE IT A CRIME TO PROPOSE REVISIONS IN THE CONSTITUTION OR FOR STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THOSE IMPRISONED INCLUDE PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC CLERGYMAN, UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, AND POLITICAL LEADERS. A FORMER PRESIDENT OF SOUTH KOREA RECEIVED A SUSPENDED SENTENCE AND THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1971 (WHO RECEIVED ABOUT 46 PERCENT OF THE VOTE) WAS KIDNAPPED FROM JAPAN AND IS UNDER HOUSE ARREST.

3. WE ARE SURE YOU WOULD NOT WANT YOUR VISIT TO SOUTH KOREA TO BE INTERPRETED AS APPROVING OR EVEN CONDONING THE UNWARRANTED EXCESSES OF GOVERNMENTAL POWER EXERCISED BY PRESIDENT PARK. ON THE CONTRARY, WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONVEY TO PRESIDENT PARK THE GROWING CONCERN AMERICANS HAVE ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY IN KOREA. PRESIDENT PARK SHOULD BE INFORMED THAT UNLESS HUMAN RIGHTS ARE RESTORED TO THE KOREAN PEOPLE, THE UNITED STATES WILL BEGIN TO DISENGAGE FROM SOUTH KOREA. THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE HAVE PLACED RESTRICTIONS ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH KOREA BECAUSE OF THE OPPRESSION IN THAT COUNTRY.

4. AS YOU MAY BE AWARE, MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES, AS WELL AS CHURCH AND UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS, ARE ADVOCATING A REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION TO RESTORE POLITICAL FREEDOMS. A DEBATE HAS COMMENCED IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT PARK HAS LIFTED TWO EMERGENCY DECREES HE HAS NOT SHOWN ANY SIGN OF RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO THESE DEMANDS. IF, DURING YOUR VISIT, YOU SHOULD MEET ONLY WITH LEADERS IN THE GOVERNMENT, THE KOREAN PEOPLE WOULD INTERPRET THIS BEHAVIOR AS INDICATING APPROVAL FOR CONTINUING THE PRESENT AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT. WE THEREFORE STRONGLY URGE YOU TO ADDRESS CONFIDENTIAL

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THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND MEET PRIVATELY WITH OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS, AS WELL AS CHURCH AND UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS.

5. WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MEET WITH US BEFORE MAKING YOUR TRIP TO SOUTH KOREA. END QUOTE.

SIGNED BY CONGRESSMEN BINGHAM, FRASER, HAMILTON, MINK,

MEEDS, O'NEAL, UDALL, AND WHALEN. INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, LEGISLATIVE MAIL, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE241639
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: JDFORBES:MAR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740314-0481
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741176/aaaacmll.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Aug-2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <21 MAR 2003 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN OVER PRESIDENTIAL TRIP TO KOREA
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, KS, US, (FORD, GERALD R)
To: SEOUL
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005